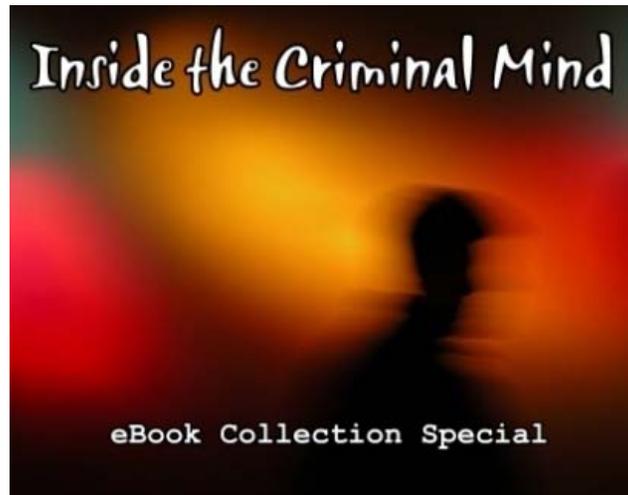


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Presents

A Psychological Assessment of Crime Profiling

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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.

A Psychological Assessment of Crime Profiling is the second article in this collection.

Editor's Note: As an adjunct to its instructional programs in abnormal psychology, the Behavioral Science Unit, FBI Academy, Quantico, Va., has attempted to assist the law enforcement community in the preparation of psychological profiles in selected unsolved criminal cases. "A Psychological Assessment of Crime Profiling" is the introductory article in a three-part series of reports on the use of psychological criminal analysis as an investigative technique. Subsequent articles will feature the specific application of this technique to lust murderer and arson-for-profit investigations.

During the summer of 1979, a woman in a suburban city on the east coast reported to the police that she had been raped. After learning the facts of this case, the investigating officer realized that this was the seventh rape within the past 2 years wherein the same modus operandi was used. There were no investigative leads remaining in any of these incidents. The investigation conducted thus far had yielded no suspect. The incident reports, together with transcripts of interviews with the victims, were forwarded to the FBI Training Division with a request from the police department that a psychological profile of the suspect or suspects be provided. After careful examination of the submitted materials by the FBI Academy's Behavioral Science Unit, a psychological profile was constructed and provided to the requesting agency. The Behavioral Science Unit advised that these rapes were probably committed by the same person and described him as a white male, 25 to 35 years of age (most likely late 20's or early 30's), divorced or separated, working at marginal employment (laborer, etc.), high school education, poor self-image, living in the immediate area of the rapes, and being involved in crimes of voyeurism (peeping tom). It was likely that the police had talked to

the rapist in the past due to his being on the streets in the neighborhood in the early morning hours.

Three days after receiving the profile provided to them, the requesting agency developed approximately 40 suspects in the neighborhood who met the age criteria. Using additional information in the profile, they narrowed their investigation to one individual and focused their investigation on him. He was arrested within a week. This case demonstrates how psychological profiling can be of assistance.

The role of the police officer in American society has never been accurately defined. Daily, it seems, police are burdened with new responsibilities and are required to be experts in responsibilities already assigned to them. There has, in recent years, been an increase in the public's awareness of the nature of police work. This additional insight has been provided primarily through the use of the media (TV, books, newspapers); however, this awareness is largely focused upon the police function of investigating crimes. Studies have indicated that criminal investigations actually occupy less than 15 percent of the police department's time. The irony of this is that the function of investigating and solving crimes is extremely important to the public at large and is a major gage by which departments are rated by city officials who provide funding.

This is especially true when a crime is committed which is so bizarre and shocking to the community that the public demands swift and positive action.

As the crime rate grows in this country and the criminals become more sophisticated, the investigative tools of the police officer must also become more sophisticated. One such sophisticated tool does exist and may help answer the question commonly voiced by police and others at the scene of a violent crime, "Who would do a thing like this?" This tool is the psychological assessment of crime profiling.

The solution of crimes is the most difficult task for the police. The officer must arrive at the scene of a crime, work backward in an effort to reconstruct that crime, formulate a hypothesis of what occurred, and then launch an orderly and logical investigation to determine the identity of the criminal. During this process, items of evidence are carefully collected, identified, initialed, logged, and packaged for later examination, perhaps under laboratory conditions.

The purpose of this article is to acquaint the police officer with the fact that there are certain clues at a crime scene which, by their very nature, do not lend themselves to being collected or examined, and to familiarize the officer with the concepts of profiling. Clues left at a crime scene may be of inestimable value in leading to the solution of the crime; however, they are not necessarily items of physical evidence. For example, how does a police officer collect rage, hatred, fear, love, irrationality, or other intangibles? These aspects may be present at the crime scene but the untrained officer will miss them. Nothing can take the place of a well-executed investigation; however, the use of psychology to assist in the assessment of a crime is an additional tool which the police officer should use in solving crimes.

The purpose of the psychological assessment of a crime scene is to produce a profile; that is, to identify and interpret certain items of evidence at the crime scene which would be indicative of the personality type of the individual or individuals committing the crime. The term "profile" is defined in Webster's Dictionary of the American Language (1968) as "a short, vivid biography briefly outlining the most outstanding characteristics of the subject." The goal of the profiler is to provide enough information to investigators to enable them to limit or better direct their investigations. For example, in one case, a profile provided enough information that officers recalled an individual whom they had already questioned that fit the profile description. When they returned to the individual, he confessed.

The officer must bear in mind that the profile is not an exact science and a suspect who fits the description is not automatically guilty. The use of profiling does not replace sound investigative procedures.

Profiling is not a new concept. During World War 11, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) employed a psychiatrist, William Langer, to profile Adolf Hitler. Langer assembled all that was known about Hitler at the time, and based upon the information he received, attempted a long-range "diagnosis," as well as some predictions about how Hitler would react to defeat.

Police officers are often carefully trained in the techniques of crime scene searches. Forensic scientists constantly provide law enforcement personnel with the results of research which enable officers to maintain and update skills in gathering physical evidence. The concept of profiling works in harmony with the search for physical evidence.

Behavioral scientists are busy in their attempts to research and catalog nonphysical items of evidence, such as rage, hatred, fear, and love. However, these attempts are usually oriented toward therapy rather than forensic applications. Nonetheless, the results may be applied to teach police officers to recognize the existence of these emotions and other personality traits in a crime scene. Once recognized, police may then construct a profile of the type of person who might possess these emotions and/or personality traits.

The basis for profiling is nothing more than the understanding of current principles of behavioral sciences, such as psychology, sociology, criminology and political science.

Behavioural science is, at best, an inclusive science. It is often referred to an "art form." However, its use does have validity in law enforcement. Human behavior is much too complex to classify, yet attempts are often made to do so with the hope that such a vastly complicated system can be brought into some control. The Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM II), used by mental health professionals, is one example of this attempt. While attempts to neatly classify behavior are mostly unsuccessful, one must remember why these attempts are made. There are many types of "normal" and "abnormal" behavior. Many of these behaviors may have a label attached to them by behavioral scientists. It is most important to bear in mind that such a label is merely an abbreviated way to describe a behavior pattern. It is nothing more than a convenience by which professionals communicate. The important aspect is the specific characteristics or symptoms of each person. The symptoms are revealed in the way the individual "acts out" and in the responses

which the individual may make to the professional. The labels may differ from doctor to doctor because they are simply each doctor's interpretation of the symptom.

A symptom, then, is the "visible evidence of a disease or disturbance" and a crime, particularly a bizarre crime, is as much a symptom as any other type of acting out by an individual. A crime may reflect the personality characteristics of the perpetrator in much the same fashion as the way we keep and decorate our homes reflects something about our personality.

A crime scene is usually confined to the area in which the crime was committed. For the purposes of this article, the term crime scene includes the following: The scene of the crime; the victim of the crime, as in the case of rape; and all other locations involved in the crime, including such areas as the recovery site when a homicide is committed in one location and the body deposited in another.

The victim is one of the most important aspects of the psychological profile. In cases involving a surviving victim, particularly a rape victim, the perpetrator's exact conversation with the victim is of utmost importance and can play a very large role in the construction of an accurate profile.

The profile is not all inclusive and does not always provide the same information from one profile to another. It is based on what was or was not left at the crime scene. Since the amount of psychological evidence varies, as does physical evidence, the profile may also vary. The profile information may include:

- 1) The perpetrator's race.
- 2) Sex.
- 3) Age range.
- 4) Marital status.
- 5) General employment.
- 6) Reaction to questioning by police.
- 7) Degree of sexual maturity.
- 8) Whether the individual might strike again.
- 9) Possibility that he/she has committed a similar offense in the past.
- 10) Possible police record.

These profiles are not the result of magical incantations and are not always accurate. It is the application of behavioral science theory and research to the profiler's knowledge of patterns which may be present at various crime scenes. It is important that the profiler have wide exposure to crime scenes so that he may see that these patterns may exist. It is also important that the individual attempting to profile crime scenes have some exposure to those criminals who have committed similar crimes.

The entire basis for a good profile is a good crime scene examination and adequate interviews of victims and witnesses. When officers find individuals who are willing to attempt psychological evaluations of crime scenes, they often ask the profiler what materials should be sent to him. Necessary items for a psychological profile include:

- 1) Complete photographs of the crime scene, including photographs of the victim if it is a homicide. Also helpful is some means of determining the angle from which the photographs were taken and a

general description of the immediate area. One enterprising police officer developed the excellent technique of photocopying his crime scene sketch, attaching one copy to each photo, and then outlining in red the area which was included in the photograph.

2) The completed autopsy protocol including, if possible, any results of lab tests which were done on the victim.

3) A complete report of the incident to include such standard details as date and time of offense, location (by town as well as by actual site of incident), weapon used (if known), investigative officers' reconstruction of the sequence of events (if any), and a detailed interview of any surviving victims or witnesses. These items are usually a part of all investigations and do not generally require extra report writing or extra written material. Also included in most investigative reports is background information on the victim(s). Yet, this seems to be the area where the least amount of information is available to the profiler. Usually, this is because the investigative officer cannot possibly write down all of the many details concerning the victim which he collects while investigating the crime.

When the investigator provides information concerning a victim to a profiler, some items which the officer should include are:

1) Occupation (former and present).

2) Residence (former and present).

3) Reputation, at work and in his neighborhood.

- 4) Physical description, including dress at the time of the incident.
- 5) Marital status, including children and close family members.
- 6) Educational level.
- 7) Financial status, past and present.
- 8) Information and background of victim's family and parents, including victim's relationship with parent.
- 9) Medical history, both physical and mental.
- 10) Fears.
- 11) Personal habits.
- 12) Social habits.
- 13) Use of alcohol and drugs.
- 14) Hobbies.
- 15) Friends and enemies.
- 16) Recent changes in lifestyle.
- 17) Recent court action.

The primary psychological evidence which the profiler is looking for is motive. After a Survey of the evidence, the profiler applies an age-old rule known as "ockhams razor" which, originally stated, is "what can be done with fewer assumptions is done in vain with more".

This 14th century philosophy has, in investigative circles, generally come to mean that given a problem with several alternative solutions, the most obvious answer is usually correct. An aid to the application of ockhams razor is the intangible evidence that the observer gathers from the crime scene to tell him such things as whether the crime appears to be planned or whether it is the result of an irrational thought process.

Profiling is a valuable investigative tool but is not a magical process. Police officers do a great deal of profiling during the course of their work days. They constantly build mental images or profiles based upon crime scenes and then use these profiles in an attempt to limit the scope of their investigations. These profiles are based upon the officer's extensive knowledge of the officer's experience occurs, there are behavioral scientists available who can assist by providing these types of profile. The FBI provides limited service in the area of profiling and these limitations are based on the amount of time and manpower available to conduct such profiles.

Instruction is the primary purpose of the Behavioral Science Unit of the FBI Training Division. Courses in applied criminology, abnormal psychology, sociology, hostage negotiations, interpersonal violence, and other behavioral science-related areas are taught at the Academy to FBI Agents and police officers. In the past, as an adjunct to its

instructional programs, the Training Division has attempted to assist law enforcement agencies with the preparation of psychological profiles. During the initial stages of the FBI's involvement in profiling, these profiles were limited to students attending the FBI National Academy. During the past year, however, over 100 unsolved cases have been received by the Training Division from law enforcement officers nationwide. Due to increased instructional and research commitments, it was necessary to implement guidelines and control measures to manage and monitor effectively this investigative technique.

It is most important that this investigative technique be confined chiefly to crimes against the person where the motive is lacking and where there is sufficient data to recognize the presence of psychopathology at the crime scene. Psychological analysis is not a substitute for basic investigative principles, and all logical leads must be exhausted before requesting this service. This technique is usually confined to homicides, rapes, etc., in which available evidence indicates possible mental deficiency or aberration on the part of the perpetrator. Cases will be profiled on a "time available" basis, with the more severe cases being given priority. It should also be understood that analysis is for lead value only, and clinical opinions will not be offered. Cases which, in the opinion of the training division, fail to meet these criteria will be returned to the requesting agency. Under no circumstances should physical evidence be transmitted to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, since the possibility exists that information may not be returned to the agency.

An agency requesting a psychological profile should contact the Federal Bureau of Investigation field office located within the territory of the department and provide to them the information as requested herein. The agency should make it known to the field office that they are requesting a psychological profile from the Behavioral Science Unit, Training Division.

THE END

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