# Psychological Profile of a Criminal

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## Abstract

*The aim of this study was to know how to develop a profile of a criminal/terrorist. Keeping this view in mind the investigator discussed this point with many experts and police personnel and on the basis of their opinion and available literature the efforts are framed in the form as given below. The most common adversaries of profiling have been: (1) airplane hijackers; (2) serial killers, as well as rapists; and (3) drug couriers; (4) assassins; (5) terrorists, at least as airline passengers in the wake of 9/11; (6) suicide bombers; (7) mass murderers; (8) gang leaders and gang members; (9) child molesters or pedophiles; (10) auto thieves; (11) fugitives etc.*

*The Crime Scene Analysis consists of six steps as Profiling Inputs, Decision Process Models, Crime Assessment, Criminal Profile, the Investigation, the Apprehension. Behavioral Evidence Analysis (BEA) created by **Brent Turvey** is broken down into four main steps, which can be adopted during two phases.*

*The origins of Investigative Psychology made by David Canter in 1985, Canter's research focuses primarily on which of the established psychological principles can be adapted to, or used for, the development of profiles in the investigation of crime.*

*Key words: Criminal, Crime, Circle theory, Behavioural, Profile*

## INTRODUCTION

**Profiling** is the process of inferring distinctive personality characteristics of individuals responsible for committing criminal acts. To be a good profiler, one needs to have knowledge of sociology, psychology, psychiatry, and criminology, as well as the ability to blend the theories of these disciplines with common sense. Race, sex, and religion are perhaps the most controversial elements in profiling, but good profilers also make more

use of things like travel patterns, socioeconomic status, geographic locations, age, and clothing.

## COMMON ADVERSARIES

The most common adversaries of profiling have been: (1) airplane hijackers; (2) serial killers, as well as rapists; and (3) drug couriers. To this list might be added: (4) assassins; (5) terrorists, at least as airline passengers in the wake of 9/11; (6) suicide bombers, as well as bombers and arsonists in general; (7) mass murderers, especially those who "snap" and engage in workplace violence, or school violence; (8) gang leaders and gang members; (9) child molesters or pedophiles; (10) auto thieves; (11) fugitives; and (12) the most controversial one of all -- "racial profiling" which was a short-lived attempt to "spot" suspicious minorities who didn't seem to "fit" into the neighbourhood they were driving, walking, or jogging in. The Lecture on Situational Awareness (in the Homeland Security course) provides the reader with a good background on non-serial killer profiling and also discusses three other adversaries: (13) stalkers; (14) abusers, as in domestic violence; and (15) con men. Also, another adversary, (16) the white collar criminal, has recently emerged within the field of forensic accounting (see Lecture on Lifestyles of Financial Criminals).

## CRIMES SUITABLE FOR PROFILING

Sadistic torture in sexual assaults

Eviscerations

Postmortem cases of slashing and cutting

Motiveless fire settings

Lust and mutilation murders

Rapes

Occult crimes

Child sexual abuse including pedophilia

Bank robberies

Obscene and terrorist letter writing

**WHAT IS CRIMINAL PROFILING**

Criminal profiling consists of analyzing a crime scene and using the information to determine the identity of the perpetrator. While this doesn't directly give you the perpetrator's name, it is very helpful in narrowing down suspects. For example, a profile based on a crime scene provides information that may include the perpetrator's personality, sex, age, ethnic background, and possible physical features such as disfigurements or height and weight. This information can then be used to identify possible suspects, depending on who fits the profile. Personality is one of the most important parts of a criminal profile. "Behavior reflects personality. And that is what profiling is all about".

**HOW DOES CRIMINAL PROFILING WORK**

Personality profiles of criminals are based on the way in which a crime is committed, also known as the 'method of operations' or m.o. The m.o. includes the identity of the victim(s), what the victims (in the case of a serial offender) have in common, the weapon(s) used, the degree of hostility, the existence (or lack) of any torture and/or sexual molestation, and so on. Analyzing these aspects of the crime scene, an investigator (usually a trained forensic psychologist) can determine the motives of the perpetrator, which leads to a description of the perpetrator's personality, or the personality profile.

**THE CRIME SCENE ANALYSIS**

The Crime Scene Analysis consists of six steps, which are summarized in the section that follows:

**1. Profiling Inputs:** This involves the collection and assessment of all of the materials relating to the specific case. This would typically involve any photographs taken of the, a comprehensive background check of the victim, autopsy protocols, other forensic examinations relating to the crime, and any relevant information that is necessary to establish an accurate picture about what occurred before, during or after the crime.

**2. Decision Process Models:** This stage simply involves arranging all of the information gathered in the previous stage (Profiling Inputs) into a logical and coherent pattern.

**3. Crime Assessment:** This stage would typically involve the reconstruction of the sequence of events and the specific behaviors of both the victim and perpetrator. This will aid the analyst in understanding the "role" each individual has in the crime and should assist in developing the subsequent profile of the criminal.

**4. Criminal Profile:** the combined first three steps are used to create a criminal profile incorporating the motives, physical qualities, and personality of the perpetrator.

**5. The Investigation:** Here, the actual profile is provided to requesting agencies and incorporated into their investigation.

**6. The Apprehension:** unfortunately, this stage only occurs in about 50% of cases. When a suspect is identified, he/she is interviewed, investigated, compared to the profile, etc. If the investigators have reason to believe that the suspect is the perpetrator, a warrant is obtained for the arrest of the individual, usually followed by a trial with expert witnesses including the forensic psychologist and other forensic experts, including those involved in the crime scene analysis.

**BEHAVIORAL EVIDENCE ANALYSIS**

Behavioral Evidence Analysis (BEA) created by **Brent Turvey** is broken down into four main steps, which can be adopted during two phases. Firstly, those four steps of BEA will be outlined, so the reader might develop ideas as to how they are used during the two phases.

**1. Equivocal Forensic Analysis:** This step of BEA is called Equivocal Forensic Analysis because it is important for investigators to take into consideration that the physical evidence can be interpreted in more than one way. This step is important because "one cannot render a thorough criminal profile until the physical evidence has been analyzed and interpreted".

The equivocal forensic analysis draws upon a variety of sources like:

➢ Crime scene photos, videos and sketches

➢ Investigators reports

➢ Evidence logs and evidence submission forms

➢ Autopsy reports, videos and photos

➢ Interviews of witnesses and neighbours

- ➢ Any other relevant documentation, interviews, or information
- ➢ Map of the victims travel prior to death
- ➢ Background of the victim

**2. Victimology:** It is recognized that the victim should be profiled in a similar fashion to the perpetrator though historically, victimology has been one of the most neglected fields of criminal profiling. In the situation where you have a living victim, they may be the richest source of information relating to the perpetrator, though the involvement of the victim is not to be discarded should they be killed during the incident.

**3. Crime Scene Characteristics:** These are the "distinguishing features of a crime scene as evidenced by an offender's behavioral decisions regarding the victim and the offense location, and their subsequent meaning to the offender". This step involves the determination of a number of factors relevant to the location of the crime scene, where this crime scene is placed relative to other related crime scenes, and how the offender approached the victim/s. So the location of the crime scene in relation to the rest of the world, the location of the majority of the offense occurred (the "primary crime scene"), as well as the position of the body, etc., are used to figure out the criminal's motives, or what it meant to him or her.

**4. Offender Characteristics:** It is this step which will contain the offender's behavioral and personality characteristics that are derived from, and informed by, the three preceding steps. The offender characteristics may include such information as:

Physical build

Offender sex

Work status and habits

Remorse or guilt

Offender vehicle type

Criminal history

Skill level

Aggressiveness

Offender residence in relation to the crime

Medical history

Marital status

Race

Collectively, this information will produce a "picture" of the offender, which investigators may check off against known offenders, suspects, or suspect pools. This may produce further suspects, or may aid in reducing the amount of suspects investigators are currently looking into.

**INVESTIGATIVE PSYCHOLOGY**

The origins of Investigative Psychology can be traced back to 1985, when David Canter was called to Scotland Yard to discuss the possibility of integrating investigation techniques with psychological concepts. . Canter was unsure whether this could be accomplished, but decided to apply some of the methods of environmental psychology to criminal investigation, most notably the Railway Rapist.

Canter's research focuses primarily on which of the established psychological principles can be adapted to, or used for, the development of profiles in the investigation of crime.

The application of Canter's work is based on five aspects of the interaction between the victim and the offender, known as the five-factor model.

**1. Interpersonal Coherence:** Refers to whether a variation in criminal activity will relate to variations in the way in which the offender deals with other people in non-criminal situations.

**2. The Significance of Time and Place:** May provide the analyst with information about mobility, and therefore guide inferences about likely residential location. As the time and place of the event is largely chosen by the offender, this is seen to be important as it may represent the way in which the offender views their surroundings.

**3. Criminal Characteristics:** Used to allow researchers to develop subsystems for the classification of offender groups, which may be used to provide characteristics to investigators that are likely to be possessed by the perpetrator in the current crime. The FBI's classification of the offender as 'organized' or disorganized' is one such system used in identifying criminal characteristics, though Canter himself sees that this system is of little use considering there is so much overlap between the two classifications the offender as 'organized' or disorganized' is one such system used in identifying criminal

characteristics, though Canter himself sees that this system is of little use considering there is so much overlap between the two classifications.

**4. Criminal Career:** Simply refers to an assessment that is made to determine whether the offender may have engaged in criminal activity in the past, and what kind of activity this is most likely to have been. It is closely related to the last concept, forensic awareness.

**5. Forensic Awareness:** Is any evidence that an offender has knowledge of, or may be privy to, police techniques and procedures relating to evidence collection.

Canter developed a model of offender behavior known as **the circle theory**, which developed directly from environmental psychology. Two models of offender behavior known as the **"marauder"** and **"commuter"** hypothesis were developed from the circle theory. The marauder model assumes that an offender will "strike out" from their home base in the commission of their crimes, whereas the commuter model assumes that an offender will travel a distance from their home base before engaging in criminal activity.

The "Marauder" (above) and the "Commuter" (below) models of offender behavior. The original study that was done to develop the model was retrospective, that is, used solved cases where both the location of the offender's home and crimes were known. This must bring the practical application of this model into question, as it would be practically impossible to know whether you were dealing with a marauder or a commuter with an unknown offender. . The distances defined by the criminal range and home range are also problematic, as there is no clear relationship between the size or location of the criminal range and the distance it is from the offender's home.

**SOURCES OF THE CRIMINAL MOTIVE**

A person can feel controlled as a result of being poor, weak, unhealthy, small, ignorant, unimportant, or disrespected -- to name some common sources of the most common motive for crimes.

Someone might be motivated to commit a crime (of revenge) because he was insulted [or simply believed he was insulted] and therefore feels controlled (by the other person). He

also might be motivated to commit a crime (of theft) because he is chronically envious of what other people have and therefore feels controlled by society

## CONCLUSION

A study in the field of behavioral psychology (Pinizzotto and Finkel, 1990) provides initial data on its effectiveness.

Results suggest that profilers can produce more useful and valid criminal profiles than clinical psychologists or even experienced crime investigators.

In contrast to this study, it should not be overlooked that this method is fraught with many difficulties and pressures in the real world.

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