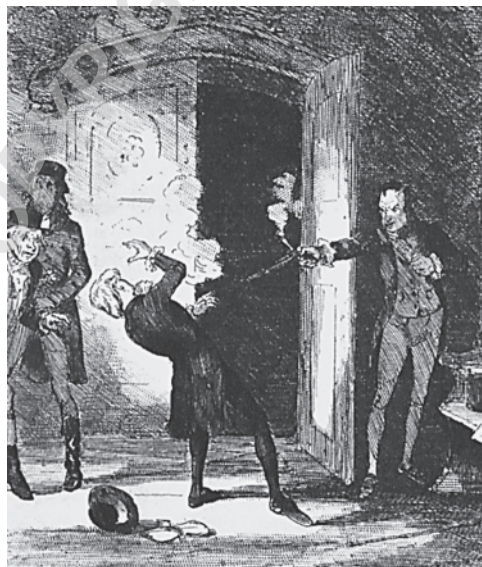


PART

I

The Road to Investigative Psychology

The Emergence of Investigative Psychology from Offender Profiling



John Bellingham assassinating the Right Honourable Spencer Perceval

Source: The New Newgate Calendar © The Folio Society Ltd 1960

CHAPTER

1

Introducing Investigative Psychology

'You two characters been seeing any psychiatrists lately?'

'Hell,' Ohls said, 'hadn't you heard? We got them in our hair all the time these days. We've got two of them on the staff. This ain't police business any more. It's getting to be a branch of the medical racket. They're in and out of jail, the courts, the interrogation rooms. They write reports fifteen pages long on why some punk of a juvenile held up a liquor store or raped a school girl or peddled tea to the senior class. Ten years from now guys like Marty and me will be doing Rorschach tests and word associations instead of chin-ups and target practice. When we go out on a case we'll carry little black bags with portable lie detectors and bottles of truth serum. Too bad we didn't grab the four hard monkeys that poured it on Big Willie Magoon. We might have been able to unmaladjust them and make them love their mothers.'

(Raymond Chandler, *The Long Good-Bye*)

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Learning Objectives

When you have completed this chapter you should be able to:

1. Understand what investigative psychology (IP) is and identify the main principles upon which it is based.
2. Detail some of the key contributions that IP can make to the management, investigation and prosecution of crime.
3. Identify the differences between IP and 'offender profiling'.
4. Appreciate the issues involved in investigative decision making.
5. Recognise the key stages of the investigative cycle and how IP can contribute to each.
6. Outline the key differences between police and academic cultures.

Synopsis

Investigative psychology is the study of offenders and the processes of apprehending them and bringing them to justice. It deals with what all those involved in crime and its investigation do, feel and think. The dominant objective is the understanding of crime in ways that are relevant to the conduct of criminal or civil investigations and subsequent legal proceedings. As such, IP is concerned with psychological input to the full range of issues that relate to the management, investigation and prosecution of crime. But it is also an approach to problem-solving psychology that has relevance far beyond crime and criminality.

It is based on the following principles:

- *All investigation is a form of decision making in which information is retrieved. Inferences are made on the basis of that information and actions result that, in turn, may generate further inferences to keep the cycle repeating until a resolution to the investigation is achieved.*
 - *The contributions to investigations grow out of an understanding of criminal actions and the effective modelling of those actions.*
 - *A key issue in contributing to all aspects of an investigative process is the identification of the salient aspects of any given set of criminal actions – of everything that happens in a crime and of the components of psychological and investigative significance.*
 - *This modelling contributes to central problem-solving processes, which consist of making inferences about subsets of information, such as the characteristics of an offender, from other subsets of information, such as the details of what happens in a crime.*
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- *In order to make effective inferences it is necessary to be able to make valid and fruitful distinctions between offenders and between crimes.*
- *The contribution of IP comes from the development of scientific principles and decision-support systems based on those principles not from the special intuitions or deductions of apparently gifted individuals. It thus feeds into many aspects of police training and the procedures that police use and is drawn on by many other people whose jobs require some form of detection or investigation.*

Investigative psychology is much more than the production of 'offender profiles' on serial killers, as is commonly believed. It provides a framework for the integration of many aspects of psychology into all areas of police and other investigations, covering all forms of crime that may be examined by the police as well as areas of activity that require investigation that may not always be considered by police investigators, such as insurance fraud, malicious fire setting, tax evasion, or customs and excise violations and even terrorism. The full range of offending activity is considered and analysed with the objective of informing the investigation, management, prediction and analysis of crime as well as the legal case. Through these explorations, IP seeks to advance the psychological understanding of offending activity, offenders and the investigative process itself.

Psychology and Investigations

Crime is everywhere. It dominates newspapers and news broadcasts. It constitutes a great deal of the fiction on television, in the cinema and in the bookshops. Governments stand and fall by how they cope with crimes and criminals. But what fascinates people most is how criminals are detected and brought to justice. No serious crime these days is solved without one or more journalists or the senior investigating officer subsequently writing a book to describe in great detail how the bad guy was caught, as illustrated by the examples given in Box 1.1.

Box 1.1 Recent Publications on Investigations into Crimes that Caught the Public Imagination

On the murders of five women in Ipswich:

Hunting Evil: Inside the Ipswich Serial Murders (2008)

by Paul Harrison and David Wilson

Cold-Blooded Evil: The True Story of the Ipswich Stranglings (2008)

by Neil Root

On the murders of two young girls in Soham:

Beyond Evil: Inside the Twisted Mind of Ian Huntley (2005)

by Nathan Yates

Soham: A Story of Our Times (2004)

by Nicci Gerrard

(continued)

On Josef Fritzl, the Austrian who kept his daughter captive in the cellar:

Monster (2008)

by Allan Hall

House of Horror: The Horrific True Story of Josef Fritzl, the Father From Hell

by Nigel Cawthorne

On the serial murderer Dr Harold Shipman:

Evil Beyond Belief: The Inside Story of How and Why Dr Harold Shipman Murdered

More than 200 People (2005)

by Wensley Clarkson

On the Washington Snipers:

Sniper: Inside the Hunt for the Killers who Terrorized the Nation (2004)

by Sari Horwitz and Michael E. Ruane

Yet at the heart of detecting culprits and bringing them to court are complex patterns of human activity that can be elucidated and facilitated by drawing on concepts, theories, methods and results from psychology. It is the realisation that all aspects of the investigation of crimes can be made more effective by drawing on behavioural science that has drawn psychologists and other social scientists into the area of investigations. They are discovering the many fascinating challenges that investigations raise about human behaviour. Developments in our understanding of people in general are therefore emerging from the attempts to help solve crimes.

Many sciences are now contributing to the detection of crime and the management of criminals. Breakthroughs in DNA identification and a wide array of forensic procedures are as much part of real criminal investigations as they are of the fictional television portrayals such as *CSI* and *Silent Witness*. Contributions from psychology are slowly emerging to match these developments from the natural sciences. The many different ways in which psychology can contribute to police work are brought together in the field of IP. This is a rapidly developing discipline within applied psychology, which integrates a diverse range of aspects of psychology in ways that contribute to all areas of criminal and civil investigation.

IP is concerned with all the forms of criminality that may be examined by the police, from arson and burglary to murder, rape or even terrorism. The discipline also extends to cover those areas of activity that require investigation but may not always be conventionally within the domain of police services. These may include matters such as insurance fraud, corruption, malicious fire setting, tax evasion or smuggling. Increasingly, issues of crowd control and public order are also being studied by Investigative Psychologists. The military values of IP are also being recognised for dealing with insurgents in war zones as well as home grown terrorists.

The main concerns of IP are the ways in which criminal activities may be examined and understood in order for the detection of crime to be effective and for legal proceedings to be appropriate. As such, IP deals with psychological input to the full gamut of issues that relate to the management, investigation, prosecution of crime and defence of suspects.

The contributions that psychologists can make to police investigations have until recently been most widely known and understood in terms of 'offender profiles'. Offender profiling,

as typically practised, is the process by which individuals, drawing on their clinical or other professional experience, or background as detectives, make judgements about the personality traits or psychodynamics of the perpetrators of crimes. They may also make other more operationally useful guesses about the demeanour, family background, or criminal history of an unknown offender. From the perspective of scientific psychology, however, such a process is flawed in its reliance on personal judgement rather than clearly defined aspects of criminal actions that have been empirically explored.

This comparison between the deductive, 'fictional-hero' approach and that of the scientific psychologist is not new to psychology. It has many parallels with the distinction between clinical and actuarial judgements that were explored by Meehl (1996). The clinician uses her or his judgements and experience to form an opinion about the patient. In contrast actuarial judgements are those based on careful measurements and the resultant statistical relationships. In a series of studies first published in 1954 and followed up over subsequent decades, it has been found that the actuarial decision processes were far more accurate and valid than those based on clinical judgement. In general the scientific approach proves to be far more effective than that based upon personal opinion.

The clinically derived theories upon which much 'offender profiling' has relied have been equally questioned by a number of researchers (such as Beauregard and Proulx, 2002; Egger, 1999; Smith, 1993). Of course it is possible to develop principles from research that can then inform the professional judgements of experts. Bennell, Taylor and Snook (2007) have illustrated this neatly by taking findings from Canter's (2005) geographical offender profiling studies as the basis for training people in thinking about offenders' home bases (Bennell, Taylor and Snook, 2007). They show that when such training is applied to (admittedly rather limited) sets of crimes, informed respondents could operate as well as some aspects of computer software.

The study of geographical offender profiling shows how 'clinical judgements' can be enhanced from research and how IP allows us to move beyond those offender profiles that were originally the drawing of a pen-picture to describe the likely characteristics of an unknown offender. As we shall see there are reasons why this may not be possible under some circumstances. There are also reasons why some aspects of the 'pen-picture' are more feasible to produce than others. A careful, systematic exploration of what is involved in contributing to police investigations needs to go far beyond personal opinion derived from the experience of any given individual.

The lack of scientific rigour evident in the profiling process has for two decades driven proponents of IP research to map out the scientific discipline that could underpin and systematise contributions to investigations. This more academically grounded approach is opening up the potential applications of psychology beyond those areas in which 'profiling' first saw the light of day. Early profilers insisted that their skills were only relevant to bizarre crimes in which some form of psychopathology was evident, notably serial killing and serial rape but investigative psychologists now study and contribute to investigations across the full spectrum of illegal activities.

Thus, although IP today is a very different discipline from the early attempts at 'offender profiling' it is nonetheless helpful to understand the origins of informed contributions to the

work of detectives. These contributions can be traced back long before trainers at the FBI academy in Quantico came to public notice because they were fictionalised in Hollywood movies. The early work went through the same stages as all scientific activity. Thus, to understand the origins of IP we need to go back many centuries and examine the ways in which criminal investigators formed views of the crimes and criminals they were investigating.

The Emergence of IP

Most people learn about crime and about the potential contribution of psychologists to investigations from fictional accounts. However, fictional accounts of psychological contributions to police investigations are very misleading.

One problem with such fiction is that it almost invariably deals with the investigation of serial killers. These murderers provide such a simple icon of evil and depravity that they easily generate an apparently worthy foil for the hero of the story, the 'detective' who solves the case. But in order to create an appealing fictional hero who will detect and uncover the villain, the hero's wit and virtue have to be emphasised by contrast with the person who kills over and over again. To emphasise the power of the hero (or more recently heroine) the killer has to be shown not only to be callous and cold-blooded but also to be clever and devious. There is little dramatic mileage to be obtained from showing that the difficulty in detecting the serial killer is a product of ineffective record keeping, poor police training and the general anonymity that a free society affords.

Further, any account of serial killers, in fact or fiction, always runs the risk of sensationalising its subject and pandering to fiction writers', and readers', search for a plot that has an exciting momentum, with individuals who are clear antagonists pitted against each other. Processes and systems play little part in such accounts. In fiction research findings are assigned to the insights of the hero, not to painstaking study. So inevitably, fiction does not capture the scientific process at all and leads to the implication that all that is needed is an insightful person who gleans an understanding of criminals from experience or intelligence, not from an arena of established procedures and knowledge on which any professional can build.

The results of research can be used by anyone with the skills to understand them. They become part of the public domain of science. When the science deals with the actual people who carry out crimes, how their crimes differ, and the ways in which that understanding can be utilised by police investigators, then it can feed into many aspects of police training and the procedures that police use.

Origins in 'Offender Profiling'

The practice of producing 'offender profiles' became widely known when the special agents at the FBI Academy in Quantico started publishing reports of the procedures they were using (for example Ressler, Burgess and Douglas, 1988). They emphasised an objective approach based in experience of criminal investigations. As Hazelwood *et al.* (1987) put it very clearly, the view of these FBI agents was that: 'Successful profilers are experienced in criminal investigations

and research and possess common sense, intuition, and the ability to isolate their feelings about the crime, the criminal, and the victim. They have the ability to evaluate analytically the behavior exhibited in a crime and to think very much like the criminal responsible' (Hazelwood *et al.*, 1987: 148).

This makes it clear that Hazelwood and his colleagues did not see a strong research basis to their activities. They saw the skills as residing in the ' profiler' rather than being the product of systematic social science. It is not surprising therefore that many researchers found deficiencies in the accounts that these FBI agents produced of their work. For example, Alison and Canter (1999), Coleman and Norris (2000), and Muller (2000) all draw attention to the misrepresentation of established psychological theory within the ideas of these FBI agents, the weaknesses of their methodologies and the lack of any convincing empirical evidence for their claims. However, the uptake of the idea of profiling by brilliant crime fiction writers, most notably Thomas Harris in his 1988 book *The Silence of the Lambs*, with the subsequent blockbuster movies, changed the common meanings of 'profile'.

The 1999 *Collins Concise Dictionary* gives two meanings for a 'profile' as either a 'short biographical sketch' or 'a graph, table, etc. representing the extent to which a person, field or object exhibits various tested characteristics'. However Thomas Harris promulgated the much more exotic idea of a profile, which Blau (1994: 261, attributing to Reiser, 1982) describes as '... an arcane art in which psycho-diagnostic assessment and psychobiography are combined with case evidence and probabilities from similar cases to draw a picture of a likely offender ...'. Far from this being an objective biographical sketch or even a measure of the extent to which the offender exhibits various tested characteristics, Blau (1994: 261) makes it clear that, when he was writing in the early 1990s, 'contrary to hopes and expectations for a scientifically derived investigative tool, psychological profiling is merely an inferential process analogous to a psychological evaluation done with an ordinary client.'

In the decades since Blau was writing it has become clear that developing a scientifically derived investigative tool may be more difficult than the early writings by FBI special agents had implied (Mokros and Alison, 2002). Nonetheless, their promotion of the potential links between the actions associated with a crime and the characteristics of the person who committed that offence have drawn an increasing number of serious scientists to elaborate and find answers to the central psychological questions that are implicit within the concept of 'profiling' and associated activities.

The development of a scientific psychological approach to police work had its roots in the experience of David Canter when he found that his advice to a major police enquiry was seen to be of great value (Canter, 1994). His background was in applied social and environmental psychology so he did not approach the task of helping the police with their enquiries from the perspective of a clinician who could draw on memories of criminals he had dealt with, or experience of earlier investigations. He derived his views from what previous studies he could find and his own approach within applied psychology. So that when he realised how helpful such a contribution could be he did not think of himself as some sort of genius who could now offer his services to the police on the basis of his one big success. Instead he saw the opportunity for helping to develop a whole new area of applied psychology that he called *investigative psychology* in 1992 (Canter, 1995).

The Investigative Cycle

An important development in the emergence of IP as a distinct applied discipline was the overt recognition that the work of investigators is essentially a decision-making process. David Canter was very influenced in making this step by his early work as a psychologist in a school of architecture (cf. Canter, 1977). Architects had invited psychologists into their research and training activities in the 1960s with the emergence of a much more systematic approach to design. Part of this approach was to blow away the myth of architecture being a wholly intuitive, creative art and introduce the idea of architecture as a 'design process', which although it drew on creative insights nonetheless saw architecture as consisting of a series of decisions based on careful amassing of information, analysing that information and then making choices on the basis of the results of the analysis.

Canter and Youngs (2003) took this perspective into the consideration of what it is that the police do to which psychology can contribute. They posited that the challenges police face during the course of an investigation may be readily conceptualised as a series of decision-making tasks. This allows the investigation process to be informed by psychological studies of effective and ineffective decision making. The evaluation of the evidence and leads available in an investigation will similarly benefit from thinking of this information as the basis of some form of scientific 'data'.

Investigations as Decision-Making

The decision-making tasks that constitute the investigation process can be derived from consideration of the sequence of activities that detectives follow, starting from the point at which a crime is committed through to the bringing of a case to court. As they progress through this sequence of activities, detectives reach choice points, at which they must identify the possibilities for action on the basis of the information they can obtain. For example, when a burglary is committed they may seek to match fingerprints found at the crime scene with known suspects. This is a relatively straightforward process of making inferences about the likely culprit from the information drawn from the fingerprints. The action of arresting and questioning the suspect follows from this inference.

However, in many cases the investigative process is not so straightforward. Detectives may not have such clear-cut information but, for example, suspect that the style of the burglary is typical of one of a number of people they have arrested in the past. Or, in an even more complex example, they may infer from the disorder at a murder crime scene that the offender was a burglar disturbed in the act. These inferences will either lead them to seek other information or to select from a possible range of actions, including arresting and charging a likely suspect.

Investigative decision-making thus involves the identification and selection of options, such as possible suspects or lines of enquiry that will lead to the eventual narrowing down of the search process. Throughout this process detectives must gather the appropriate evidence to identify the perpetrator and prove their case in court. A clear understanding of the investigation process as a series of decision-making tasks allows the challenges implicit in this process to be readily and appropriately identified. The main challenge to investigators is to make important

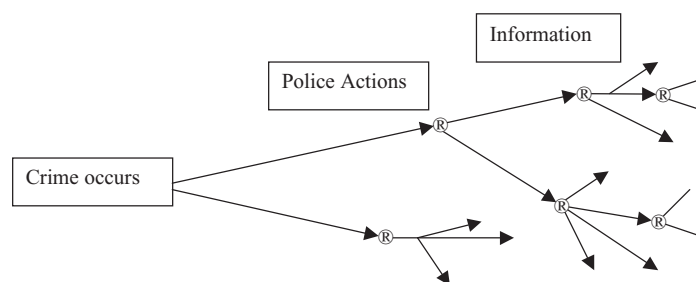


Figure 1.1 Schematic indication of the rapidly developing information in a major police investigation.

decisions under considerable pressure and in circumstances that are often ambiguous. The events surrounding the decisions are likely to carry a great emotional charge and there may be other political and organisational stresses that also make objective judgements very difficult. A lot of information, much of which may be of unknown reliability, needs to be amassed and digested. In decision-making terms the investigative process can be represented as in Figure 1.1.

In this diagram the lines represent investigative actions by the police while the nodes are the results of those actions – new pieces of information or facts. Immediately after a crime occurs, detectives often have few leads to follow up. However, as they begin to investigate information comes to light, opening up lines of enquiry. These produce more information, suggesting further directions for investigative action. The rapid buildup of information in these first few days will often give rise to exponential increases in the cognitive load on detectives, reaching a maximum weight after some short period of time. At this point investigators will be under considerable stress. Studies of human decision-making carried out by Flin, Slaven and Stewart (1996) in similarly stressful contexts, show that there are likely to be many heuristic biases and inefficiencies in decisions made under these sorts of conditions. The relevance of these issues to complex police investigations has been reviewed in a number of recent studies (for example, Alison, Barrett and Crego, 2007; Alison and Crego, 2008).

As the investigation progresses, detectives will eventually be able to start to narrow down their lines of enquiry by establishing facts that close off all but one of them, substantially reducing the general level of demand. The general diamond shape in Figure 1.2 represents

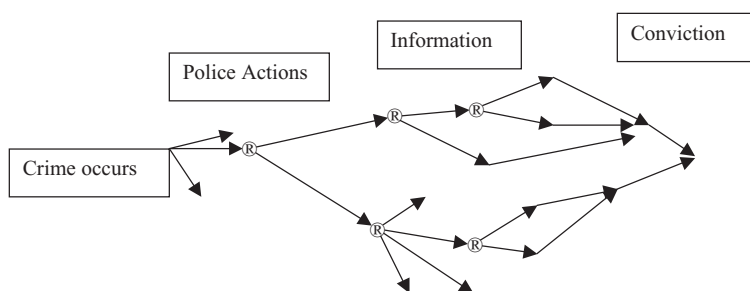


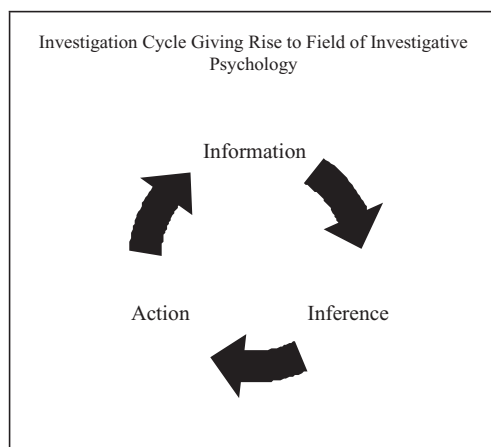
Figure 1.2 Police investigation indicating the convergence on a suspect and conviction.

the typical progression of an investigation. The diagram depicts the initial build up and then the subsequent narrowing down of the information (the nodes) under consideration and investigative steps related to these (the lines) as the investigation becomes increasingly focused to the point where an arrest occurs.

Areas of Contribution

Throughout all the activities of any investigation there are three distinct processes in play, each of which carries different implications of how psychology may be relevant to those processes. These can be represented by a simple framework for these three sets of tasks (as shown in Box 1.2). In essence they can be regarded as giving rise to IP.

Box 1.2 The Investigative Cycle



Investigative psychology is the systematic, scientific study of

- investigative information, its retrieval, evaluation and utilisation
- police actions and decisions, their improvement and support, and
- the inferences that can be made about criminal activity

with the objective of improving criminal and civil investigations, and legal processes.

Effective Information

The decision cycle points to three main areas that investigative psychologists explore. One is the consideration of the information with which the police and other investigators work. All areas of applied psychology deal with the recording of information so there is considerable expertise to be drawn upon to make investigative processes more effective.

One approach is to consider the collection of any police information as similar to any other research instrument that may be developed, whether it is a questionnaire, an open-ended interview or even a psychophysiological test such as the 'polygraph' used in 'lie detection'. Any measuring instrument needs to have an established level of reliability. In other words two people using it under similar conditions should get similar results. The information-gathering procedures used by the police are not systematically put to this test.

Beyond reliability is the even more challenging issue of validity. Virtually all the studies that psychologists carry out assume that any informants will perform to the best of their ability and will try to be as honest as possible. This may be a naïve assumption for many psychologists but it is foolhardy for anyone involved with criminals to make this assumption. Even witnesses and victims may have understandable reasons for not telling the whole truth or even for lying. A growing amount of investigative psychological research is therefore aimed at developing ways of making sure the information is as valid as possible.

Reliability and validity are only the starting point for all the issues that are raised when considering the information the police retrieve. There is also the matter of obtaining more detailed and accurate information, which can be aided for instance by special interview procedures such as the 'cognitive interview' (Fisher and Geiselman, 1992; Geiselman *et al.*, 1985, 1986) as discussed in later chapters. The robustness of the information collection procedures, in other words how tolerant they are of being used by people under difficult circumstances who may not be very well trained, is a further aspect that psychologists explore (Hammond, Wagstaff and Cole, 2006; Memon *et al.*, 1997).

Appropriate Inference

Once there is some information to work with there is the significant challenge of determining what conclusions can be drawn from this information. These conclusions are inferences that claim that certain features are linked. The most obvious example is making inferences about the characteristics of the offender from some knowledge of how the crime was committed, as David Canter (1994) did in the investigation that led to the arrest and conviction of John Duffy. But there are many other inferences that are of interest and relevance to police investigations.

One inference that is often ignored, for example, is what an offender may have done with a weapon after a violent crime, or where that weapon may have come from. Such inferences can be based on probabilities from previous investigations without any knowledge of the characteristics of the offender. There are also very important inferences about which crimes may have been committed by the same person, sometimes known as comparative case analysis or 'crime linking'. Questions about what an offender may do next, or where he may be based, or how dangerous he is likely to be are also important and complex questions to which we will return in more detail in later chapters.

The exploration of inference implies an integrated set of psychological questions. Canter (1995) summarises these questions as the $A \rightarrow C$ equations, where **A** are all those actions that occur in and are related to a crime. In other words, they are known to the police before there is any recognised culprit. The **C** refers to the characteristics of the offender. The things the police want to know about him (or her) that will lead to identification and conviction. The scientific

modelling that would allow inferences to be made about the characteristics from the actions is indicated by the \rightarrow symbol. This simple symbol enshrines a complex and challenging set of issues.

The inferences that detectives make in an investigation about the perpetrator's likely characteristics, or possible next actions, or place of residence, will be valid to the extent that they are based on an effective understanding of the processes that can give rise to the key relationships that underpin these inferences. A number of potential processes are postulated within social and psychological theories. Any or all of these theories could provide a valid basis for investigative inferences if the differences in individuals that they posit correspond to real variations in criminal behaviour.

Valid inferences also depend upon an understanding of the way in which a process operates. Conceptually there are a number of different models that can be drawn on to link an offender's actions with his/her characteristics. One is to explain how it is that the offender's characteristics are the cause of the particular criminal actions. For example, if a man is known to be violent when frustrated, this knowledge provides a basis for inferring his characteristics from his actions.

A different theoretical perspective would be to look for variables that were characteristic of the offender and that would influence the particular offending actions. A highly intelligent person, for instance, may be expected to commit a fraud rather differently from someone with educational difficulties. The intelligence may be reflected in the style of action even if not in the actual cause of the action. A third possibility is that actions give rise to some consequences from which characteristics may be inferred. An example of this would be when particular types of goods are stolen that imply that the thief must have contact with other offenders who would buy or distribute those goods.

It is worth noting that the search for models of inference avoids unnecessary assumptions about what are often referred to as the 'motives' for an offence. Speculations about the reasons why an offence took place can be productive. However, they should not be confused with empirical exploration of the correlations that underlie the relationships between actions and characteristics. It is on these correlations that firm inferences can be based.

From an applied perspective, it is also important that the variables on which the inference models draw are limited to those of utility to police investigations. This implies that the A variables are restricted to those known prior to any suspect being identified, typically drawn from crime scene information and/or victim and witness statements. The C variables are limited to those on which the police can act, such as information about where the person might be living, his/her criminal history, age or domestic circumstances.

Focused Decisions

The third phase of the investigative cycle is to select from the various options that are revealed through the earlier stages and act on those options, either to seek further information or to prepare some action that will lead to an arrest or proceedings in court. These choices and decisions can be aided by 'decision support systems' that organise the information and possible inferences in ways that help investigators to visualise what is often complex material and to summarise patterns within that material.



Figure 1.3 Disciplines on which investigative psychology draws.

Disciplines Drawn On by IP

The variety of issues that IP deals with inevitably draws on many different areas of psychology, some of which are illustrated in Figure 1.3. Further, each of these areas do themselves draw on disciplines outside of psychology. For example, environmental psychology has a lot of interaction with geography, especially urban geography. The criminal psychology issues indicated here interact with more general areas of criminology, forensic psychology with forensic psychiatry, child psychology with issues in education and so on.

Mind the Gap – Bridging Policing and Psychology

One of the developments in policing that has contributed to the emergence of investigative psychology is the increasing openness of police forces to academic work and their embracing of scientific approaches to crime management. Drummond (1976) pointed out these emerging changes when he wrote ‘the police are far more open with others than was the case a decade ago’ (Drummond, 1976). These developments were encouraged when the need for a scientific perspective on large enquiries was identified by Byford (1981) in his review of the Yorkshire Ripper enquiry in which many weaknesses in police investigations were noted.

However, these contacts between police and scientists of all ilks are making it clearer that there are contrasts between the culture of the police and of academics. The difficulty of interaction between, on the one hand, the academic/scientific culture and, on the other, the culture of the police is not merely a matter of vocabulary or ingrained habits. As discussed in detail by Canter (2003), it is a set of fundamental differences in thought processes, typical modes of action and the central objectives that shape the institutions in which these cultures thrive.

The major areas of difference between the two cultures are summarised in Table 1.1. Five main areas of difference can be briefly considered.

Table 1.1 A summary of the differences between police and of psychology cultures.

	The Police	Psychology
<i>Approach to information</i>	Evidence	Data
<i>Preferred methodologies</i>	Due Process	Scientific method
<i>Explanations of human actions</i>	Individual Case	Mostly group trends
<i>Attitude to knowledge</i>	Secrecy	Publication
<i>Temporal perspective</i>	Short-term	Long-term

Data versus Evidence

Perhaps the most fundamental distinction between the police and academic communities is in what they regard as information. It was the Senior Investigating Officer of Operation Trinity, Superintendent Vince McFadden (reported in Canter, 1995) who first pointed out that what the police search for is evidence, something that can be used to prove a case in court, whereas what scientists want is data, material that they can work with, on which they can test their hypotheses. From the police point of view evidence is valid or not. For a scientist if data are suspect then they provide only lukewarm support for a particular hypothesis. Such data may not be dismissed but added to future data to help develop the argument further. Evidence makes or breaks the case. Data cumulate to help develop theories and models.

The significance of knowledge for the police is in what its consequences are. This contrasts with the interest that academics have in the process by which results were obtained. This means that information that is not actually used in a case may be put to one side by detectives. In contrast a scientist may look at it to establish whether it could be of value in understanding criminality and developing more effective processes in the future.

Canter (1995) gives an example of this from the work of Kind (1987) who demonstrated the potential of geographical profiling in relation to the Yorkshire Ripper enquiry. But his report arrived after the arrest of the 'Ripper' and so was not used in the investigation. However, rather than recognising its potential for the future, the UK police had to wait a number of years before Canter (1995) rediscovered the possibilities of geographical profiling, having never been told about Kind's earlier work.

When it comes to transactions between scientists and police officers over the information available from an investigation these differences in perspective take their toll. Law-enforcement agents are reluctant to make information available to scientists unless what can be done with it will help to turn it into evidence. There are even still police officers who cannot see the point in studying information from solved cases, believing that the central problem of each case is to find the evidence that will lead to a conviction.

As we shall see in subsequent chapters, the police do collect vast amounts of information in many forms that feeds their records. Canter and Alison (2003) have argued that improving the collection of this information and making effective use of it is a central challenge for developing a science that is relevant to police investigations.

Scientific Method versus Due Process

The training police officers get is, inevitably, focused on the law and its workings. This ties them into an appropriate concern that everything they do must be monitored and seek success. They evaluate their activities in relation to the process of law. They need to think of what is known as 'due process' to ensure that all that they do will eventually stand the test of what happens in court.

Academics, by contrast, have a fundamental commitment to intellectual freedom that is a luxury in which the police cannot indulge. Scientists are trained to test alternative hypotheses and to evaluate their success against the canons of scientific method. Science often moves forward by learning from failures. The approach to the nature of knowledge that distinguishes the two cultures is a consequence of the different relationships to the legal process.

Trend versus Case

The focus on legal outcome also gives emphasis to individual cases and the success or failure of procedures applied to them. This makes police forces exceptionally vulnerable to making decisions on the basis of unusual, one-off cases. There is considerable evidence that most people have difficulty in understanding probabilities without formal training and therefore the police are likely to dismiss the relevance of general patterns of criminality in favour of particular examples they remember, especially if these examples challenge the general statistical trends.

Even when social scientists use case studies they do so within frameworks that are built up from general patterns of activity and the broad trends that have been drawn from previous studies. They are comfortable with statistical probability and the ways in which the trends they find cohere with the logic of their unfolding theories.

Publication versus Secrecy

The importance of sustaining the development of scientific understanding through contributing to the scientific literature seems alien to many detectives. A number of people have commented on the 'defensiveness' of police culture. Hiding information from those who may destroy evidence, or use it to evade detection or capture, is a wholly appropriate habit for detectives.

The public expects an enormous amount of discretion from the most junior police officer. Police officers quickly learn that they have to wield this discretion with confidence if they are to be taken seriously. Police officers often do not understand that the processes of publication and peer commentary ameliorate academic anarchy that can be a side-effect of academic freedom.

For the ambitious police officer, solving the current case him/herself, or making an arrest, can have very direct career prospects. There are therefore pressures to hold on to information relevant to that case as it will be of direct benefit to the individual officer. If, on the other hand, police officers are at a stage in their career when academic recognition may be of some utility they can be very forthcoming and open to academic collaboration.

Academics often ignore these dynamics at their peril, thinking that the benefits of sharing information on which science is supposed to be based will be immediately recognised by their police contacts. For the police officer such openness to those outside the police is fraught with dangers and does not necessarily offer any direct career benefits.

Long-term versus Short-term

Overall the objectives of the police tend to be couched in the here and now. Academic life has a more leisurely pace. Members of the public want action from the police. Whereas academic life has unfolded with only minor changes over the half a millennium that universities and scientific laboratories have been in general existence there have been very considerable changes in the fundamental processes that characterise police work over the century-and-a-half that police forces have played a role in public life. Law enforcement agencies by their very nature must respond to the public concerns and integrate with evolving public bodies and other institutions. Academics really can survive in their ivory towers, still debating issues that exercised Greek philosophers 2000 years ago.

One further consequence of the very different contexts of police and academic work is the pressures to which they are prone. Crime and policing are so much on the political agenda and police forces, appropriately, need to respond so directly to pressures from elected politicians that an awareness of the current political concerns is essential for effectiveness at least in the higher echelons of the police. Traditionally academics, especially scientists, have been spared these concerns. Police officers are less likely to be aware of the fashions within the arcane debates of science than scientists are to know about the issues reported regularly in newspapers.

What this analysis shows is that the academic/scientific community and the police service need each other. The differences between them are generated by the overall missions of the different institutions and are usually consonant with them. Academics can benefit from taking on board some of the perspectives of the police. The police increasingly need academic and scientific input. Thus whilst both cultures have something to offer to society at large there is great benefit in them getting to understand each other so that they can work together more productively. It is out of the interaction between these cultures, a sort of miscegenation, that more effective policing will emerge and a fuller understanding of criminality will be developed.

System Integration versus Expert Opinion

The development of decision-support systems illustrates how the idea of the 'expert' who aids the police is giving way to a more integrated involvement between psychologists and the whole investigative process. The usual model that is assumed for the utilisation of psychological knowledge in a police investigation is that an expert is brought into the enquiry, rather in the way that Sherlock Holmes was, to interact directly with the investigation. The one to one contact between the 'expert' and the 'detective', so beloved of crime fiction, has found its way into police practice in the use of 'profilers' all over the world. Whilst there are probably

some values to these contributions, as Copson (1995) pointed out in his review of their contributions, they are very limited.

A rather more productive model (discussed in more detail in Canter, 1995) is the one in which scientific psychology generates principles and procedures out of which processes can be developed which then become part of investigative practice. This does not have the drama to it that the 'heroic profiler' can portray. It also means that the 'expert' is not likely to be needed once the system is in place. There are therefore personal and commercial pressures that undermine the development of this model, but it is one that is gaining ground as IP takes root.

This raises fundamental questions for psychological offender profiling. Is it possible to assess those aspects of criminal activity available to police investigators and those characteristics of the offenders that are useful to help identify and prosecute those offenders? Can valid relationships between these be demonstrated? These are the questions at the heart of IP.

Questions that Investigative Psychologists Ask

Investigative psychology covers all aspects of psychology that are relevant to the conduct of criminal or civil investigations. Its focus is on the ways in which criminal activities may be examined and understood in order for the detection of crime to be effective and legal proceedings to be appropriate. Therefore, at the very heart of social and behavioural science studies are a set of fundamental psychological questions that researchers are exploring and which the remainder of this book unpacks and answers. It is therefore useful to summarise the major psychological questions that we will be dealing with in more detail throughout the book.

Salience

In order to generate hypotheses and investigative possibilities and to select from them, detectives and other investigators must draw on some understanding of the actions of the offender(s) involved in the offence they are investigating. They must have some idea or template of typical ways in which offenders behave that will enable them to make sense of the information obtained. A central research question, then, is to identify the behaviourally important facets of offences – those facets that are of most use in revealing the salient psychological processes inherent in any given crime.

Canter and Youngs (2003) have discussed this central psychological question in some detail. They draw attention to the need to establish the salient features of the crimes being examined. So many different aspects of a crime can be considered when attempting to formulate views about that crime, that there is the challenge, before any scientific arguments can be developed, of determining which of the crime features are behaviourally important. These features are important in the sense of carrying information on which reliable empirical findings can be built.

Determining salience turns out to be a much more complex issue than is often realised, with parallels in many areas of information retrieval. It requires the determination of base

rates and co-occurrences of behaviours as well as an understanding of the pattern of actions that are typical for any given type of crime.

Consistency

One aspect of these salient features that also needs to be determined as part of scientific development is whether they are consistent enough from one context, or crime, to another such that they can form the basis for considering and interpreting those crimes and comparing them with other offences. The establishment of consistency is not straightforward. There are weaknesses in the sources of data, particularly its 'patchiness', whereby in some instances, certain features – or their absence – will be recorded and in others not. To deal with these problems with the data, as Canter and Alison (2003) have discussed, there is an emerging range of methodologies that focus on working with the sort of information that is available from police and other crime related sources (Canter and Alison, 2003).

It is worth emphasising here, though, that there are two rather different aspects of criminal consistency with which we will be dealing in later chapters. One is the consistency from the actions in a crime to the other aspects of the offender's life. This may thus allow some aspects of a one-off crime, such as the expertise involved, to be used to form views about an offender's previous training. So, the question here is which features of an offence are consistent with which, if any, aspects of an individual's background and personal characteristics.

A quite distinctly different form of consistency is that between one crime and another committed by the same person. This is often, rather loosely, referred to as an offender's *modus operandi*, or *M.O.* The question here then will be which features of an individual's offending behaviour are consistent across situations, separate offences and even across different types of offences. There are many aspects of this latter form of consistency that need to be clarified, but for the moment we just need to be aware of its relevance at the core of IP. Green, Booth and Biderman (1976) did demonstrate that *M.O.* could be given a precise definition and behavioural science statistics could be applied to help identify distinguishing offence patterns.

Development and Change

Any consideration of consistency will be against a backdrop of likely changes in a serial offender's activities. Some variation is a natural aspect of human processes. There therefore will be criminals who are consistently variable or whose behavioural trajectories demonstrate some form of career development, as well as those whose criminal behaviour will remain relatively stable over time. These issues are very similar indeed to those discussed in the more general personality literature about what is constant about people and what variable, as Youngs (2004) explores. Research around all these possibilities of consistency is therefore central to any development of a scientific basis for offender profiling.

The question of what is characteristic of an offender is one aspect of the operational problem of linking crimes to a common offender in circumstances where there is no forensic evidence, such as blood, fibres or fingerprints to link the cases. To date there has been remarkably little research on linking crimes (although interesting studies are beginning to emerge such as Woodhams, Hollin and Bull (2007) and Woodhams and Toye (2007)), even though this is a topic covered in the general personality literature (Shoda, Mischel and Wright, 1994).

The challenge to police investigations can be seen as the reverse of the personality question. Psychologists usually have a person and want to know what will be consistent about that person from one situation to another. Police investigators have a variety of situations, criminal events and need to know what consistencies can be drawn out of those events to point to a common offender.

Often consistency can also be found not so much in the individual as in the role he plays or is assigned in a criminal group. The social processes that underlie groups, teams and networks of criminals can reveal much about the consistencies in criminal behaviour and the themes that provide their foundation. A clear example of this was revealed in a study by Wilson and Donald (1999), which examined the different roles taken by teams of 'hit-and-run' burglars. They demonstrated, for example, that the offender who was given the task of driving the getaway vehicle was most likely to have a previous conviction for a vehicle-related crime. In contrast, the criminal assigned the task of keeping members of the public at bay, or controlling others who might interfere with their crime, often known as the 'heavy', was most likely to have a previous conviction for some form of violent offence. Other studies of group processes are beginning to show similar consistencies (Porter and Alison, 2006).

These findings of consistency between social role and forms of criminal endeavour are in keeping with the general thematic framework that is emerging through the studies of actual actions in a crime. They lend support to a general model of criminal activity that recognises the specific role that criminality plays in the life of the offender. It further supports the perspective that the style of criminality is an integral, natural part of the criminal's general lifestyle, not some special, atypical aspect of it.

Inference

Inferences about the likely perpetrator of a crime play a central role in driving the investigative cycle (as discussed above), so the drawing of inferences presents a key challenge in IP. Here we need to understand that exploration of inference implies an integrated set of psychological questions.

Differentiating Offenders

Although an offender's consistency is one of the starting points for empirically based models of investigative inference, in order to use these models operationally it is also necessary to have some indication of how offenders can be distinguished from each other. In part this reflects a debate within criminology about whether offenders are typically specialist or versatile in their patterns of offending (for example, Britt, 1994; Youngs, 2001). Research suggests that offenders may share many aspects of their criminal styles with most other criminals but there will be other aspects that are more characteristic of each individual. It is these rarer, discriminating features that are drawn on to provide a productive basis for distinguishing between offences and offenders.

The rarer features combine to create what may be regarded as a 'style' or 'theme' of offending. Therefore the production of a framework for classifying these different styles is a cornerstone

of IP. The classification frameworks are ways of organising the themes that distinguish crimes which can then be drawn on in inference models so that, rather than being concerned with particular, individual clues as would be typical of detective fiction, the IP approach recognises that any one criminal action may be unreliably recorded or may not happen because of situational factors. But a group of actions that together indicate some dominant aspect of the offender's style may be strongly related to some important characteristic.

The most thoroughly developed empirical framework for differentiating criminals around themes is Canter and Fritzon's (1998) study of arsonists. They drew on Shye's (1985a) action systems general model of behaviour to identify four styles of arson and were able to show that the strongest statistically significant correlations were, as predicted, between actions and characteristics that exhibited similar action system themes (Shye, 1985a). We will therefore be exploring in some detail in later chapters how offending themes can be identified and what they imply.

Methodologies for IP

A range of research methods, approaches to theory and data collection and analysis devices have a special value in answering the central questions of IP: how research problems are defined, consideration of the implications for application of the methodologies chosen and the use of actual case material to elaborate on quantitative findings. By way of introduction some general points will help prepare for the remainder of this book.

The conventional data of much of psychology, in which students or general members of the public complete questionnaires or carry out tasks in laboratories, are not really appropriate for many of the issues that are relevant to investigations. Instead data have to be collected that are much closer to the sort of information that detectives and police forces work with. There are many demands in using this type of data that are not usually found within other areas of psychology. In many ways they are more similar to the data that historians, sociologists, archaeologists or anthropologists may use. They will tend to consist of archival information or reports of actual events. There will be legal and ethical constraints on what is available and what can be done with it. But as we shall see in later chapters there is a remarkable range of material available for research if you know where to look and the appropriate pathways to obtain it.

Research Strategies

The design of the research activities also tends to eschew the laboratory experiment which is so typical of many areas of psychology. Often studies that give a clear and coherent account of patterns of activities, which may be thought of as 'descriptive', are very valuable in new areas of research. Samples drawn from a wide range of different settings are also important because there is no guarantee that criminal patterns will be the same everywhere.

There can be no assumption that one study carried out with one set of data will give results that can be confidently generalised to all similar situations in different times and places, whether it be for instance a sample of serial killers, people who have defrauded their companies or terrorists involved in a series of attacks. Therefore every study counts. If it obtains similar results to previous research in the same area confidence is strengthened in the

reliability of emerging patterns. If the results are different that is also very interesting because it adds to the richness of our understanding.

Furthermore, the sort of data that is collected carries direct and profound implications for the sorts of psychological theory that can be reasonably constructed. If theory is going to be about the active interpretations and purpose-oriented actions that a person brings to their environmental transactions then studies have to explore processes within the person. These will essentially grow out of correlations between aspects of what each participant being studied says or does. This leads to an important emphasis in research methodologies, including how the research is organised and the data collected, on fundamental assumptions about the nature of human beings. This is a most challenging paradox for any psychological research. What we are able to find out about people depends on the way we approach how we will find that out. The methodologies investigative psychologists use therefore impose the minimum set of assumptions on the data. They represent the underlying material as honestly as is possible.

Beyond Crime and Criminals

The tasks that investigative psychologists face are not uniquely tied into crime and police investigations. Many of the theories and methodologies inevitably relate to those evolving in other areas of psychology and related social sciences. The most obvious example is the study of criminals' geography. The models in use here can trace their descent to the emergence of epidemiology in the 1850s (cf. Canter, 2003). The classification of offenders and their offences draws on methodologies developed in social psychology and connects with debates in personality theory on personal consistency (for example, Shoda *et al.*, 1994). The work on interviewing draws directly on theories of memory and clinical psychology discussions of cognitive vulnerabilities (cf. Gudjonsson and MacKeith, 1988). It is therefore inevitable that the study of these issues in the context of investigations will feed back into the areas they connect with. The traffic of theories, methodologies and applications will certainly not be one way.

What distinguishes IP is its focus on problem solving. This makes the approach that is emerging in relation to criminal detection relevant to many other areas of psychology. It maps out a way of doing psychology that can be extended with value far beyond the criminal domain.

Linking Theory and Practice – The Book Ahead

The central challenge for IP is to keep its feet firmly within the realms of systematic, scientific psychology whilst still reaching out to applications and integration with the processes of investigation. This means that much of the research may have the form of action research or attempting to create the scientist-practitioner (Shapiro, 2002), as has been the goal of clinical psychology for many years. Some have even attempted to give this challenge the distinct

label of pragmatic psychology (Fisher, 1999) although that sounds almost as if it were just opportunistic or with little base in psychological theories and methods.

This search for labels to characterise the nature of the discipline is partly because of the weaknesses in what psychologists do that emerge from the ways that many of them cow-tow to a simple-minded notion of science and scientific methodology. It is going beyond the conventions of much of psychology that the real contributions to police work and the opportunities for contributing beyond criminal investigations emerge. There is also the challenging fact that the quest to develop an IP grew out of the strengths and weaknesses of the ultimately applied activity of 'offender profiling'. The background to the development of 'profiles' provides many insights into the nature and demands there are on any behavioural science that would contribute to investigations, as we see in the following chapters.

Summary

The central questions that underlie the contribution of psychology to all aspects of many varied processes of investigation have been introduced.

- These are rooted in identifying what are the crucial aspects of any pattern of behaviour to consider; its *salience*.
- These features are the basis for developing ways of distinguishing between offenders.
- This allows systematic inferences to be made about crimes and criminals where relationships have been empirically established.

Investigative psychology takes the psychological contributions to investigations far beyond the idea of the lone, insightful individual who solves crimes on the basis of his or her special gifts of deduction. These were some of the origins of psychological contributions to police work but more often reflected in fiction than in fact.

By developing a scientific psychological study of criminal actions and detection processes, a much more challenging set of questions emerge than is apparent in fictional accounts of 'profilers'. These require consideration of what is actually consistent for an offender from one situation to another. There is also the challenge of dealing with how a criminal's actions may change over time due to many different processes of maturation and learning, as well as the variations introduced by any particular situation.

The challenges are so great that any methodologies and theories that are of value in relation to crime are probably also of utility in many other areas. The IP approach is therefore of relevance far beyond the consideration of crime and criminals, relating to issues as diverse as safety in industry or new product development.

Although IP is a new, rapidly developing discipline, it is already recognised within police forces such as Israel and South Africa which have dedicated IP units. It can trace one important strand of its origins to the process that has become popularly known as 'offender profiling'. An understanding of the origins and development of this activity is of value in gaining a full mastery of IP. The following chapters therefore review the emergence of this activity.

Further Reading

Books

- Brewer, N. and Williams, K.D. (eds) *Psychology and Law: An Empirical Perspective*, Guilford, London.
- Canter, D. (1995) *Criminal Shadows*, HarperCollins, London.
- Canter, D. and Zukauskienė, R. (eds) (2008) *Psychology and Law: Bridging the Gap*, Ashgate, Aldershot.
- Feldman, P. (1993) *The Psychology of Crime*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

The *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling* published by Wiley InterScience is a major resource for current research and scholarship.

Articles

- Canter, D. (2004) Offender profiling and investigative psychology. *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling*, **1**, 1–15.
- Canter, D. (2008) Psychology and the criminal process, in *Criminal Psychology* (ed. D. Canter), Hodder Education, London.
- Downen, C., Bennell, C. and Bloomfield, S. (2007) Advances in offender profiling: a systematic review of the profiling literature published over the past three decades. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, **22** (1), 44–56.
- Muller, D.A. (2000) Criminal profiling: real science or just wishful thinking? *Homicide Studies*, **4** (3), 234–64.
- Youngs, D. (2008) Psychology and investigations, in *Criminal Psychology* (ed. D. Canter), Hodder Education, London, 177–92.

Questions for Discussion and Research

1. Watch any crime fiction episode that involves the use of an ‘offender profiler’ and consider the following:
 - (a) What evidence is offered for the claims the ‘profiler’ makes? How does the ‘profiler’ support the opinion he (rarely she) offers?
 - (b) If you did not know that the ‘profiler’ was supposed to be a psychologist what is there in his actions or opinions that would lead you to believe he was?
 - (c) What contribution does the ‘profiler’ make to solving the case? If he had not been involved how might the investigation have unfolded?
 - (d) Are you aware of any legal constraints that would have limited what the ‘profiler’ did if it had been ‘real life’?
2. What aspects of your daily life do you think are reasonably consistent? If you were to commit a crime how do you think knowledge of those consistencies would be of assistance in determining you were the culprit?
3. Note how, in the quotation that starts this chapter, Ohls refers to how psychiatry will be used by the police. Why does he not say ‘We’ll all be reading Freud and Jung instead of the police procedures manual’?

4. Compare notes with others on how you go about having breakfast. What aspects of your breakfast routines do you think are particularly important in distinguishing what you do (the 'salient' aspects) from what others do?
5. If you really had to obtain money and the only way to do it was by illegal means, how would you go about doing it? What do you think the method you choose indicates about you and the sort of person you are? Compare your choice of crime with that of other people who you think are very different from you. Comparisons of male and female choices can be especially interesting.