

# **The BRACE Character Profile™ for Investigators: How to Warm Up Cold Cases**

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Interest in profiling in general, and cold cases in particular, has been stimulated by news media coverage of the most sensational cases, popular forensic television shows, and related books and movies. The growing interest in profiling is reflected in the number of students signing up for profiling courses, the number of internet sites dealing with profiling, and the message boards focusing on crime and the nature of criminals. Is profiling more art or science? Is it more in the domain of psychiatry or of law enforcement? What are the tools and techniques of profiling and who is qualified to use them?

The term “criminal profiling” is generally associated with statistical databases and after-the-fact forensic analysis of crime scenes, victim characteristics, witness accounts, autopsies, etc.---the research approach to crime solving that evolved from the FBI’s Behavioral Science Unit<sup>1</sup> and pioneering luminaries such as Howard Teten, John Douglas, Roy Hazelwood, and Robert Ressler. Of course, the primary purpose of criminal profiling has been to narrow the focus of an investigation and to generally inform decisions related to an UNSUB (unknown subject), including subsequent approaches to interview and interrogation. However, statistics-based profiles (probabilities about age, race, employment, etc.) are of limited value on any specific case and can easily mislead an investigation<sup>2</sup>. Ultimately, it is the functional characteristics of the UNSUB that gives form and texture to the skeletal structure of statistics.

In profiling, form follows function. Accurately and systematically describe the functional characteristics of an UNSUB and the form will progressively appear. John Douglas’ pioneering functional description of crime scenes, and the criminals who generate them, as Organized vs. Disorganized or Mixed, was developed in part as a reaction against confusing psychiatric jargon<sup>3</sup> and the increasing dependence on a psychiatric classification system, which is generally regarded as the domain of mental health professionals rather than law enforcement. Organized vs. Disorganized was a descriptive and functional classification system that could be readily understood and applied by criminologists in general and law enforcement in particular, with or without the blessings of licensed psychiatrists and psychologists. But, any criminal investigator is interested in getting into the mind as well as the body (e.g., age, race, size, gender) of the criminal. Investigators do have a need to understand how the criminal thinks and acts, as well as what the criminal wants. And, regardless of how sophisticated forensic techniques become, the basics of Motive, Method, and Opportunity will still guide investigations and prosecutions.

Now for a quantum leap into the next generation of profiling, a very sophisticated technique, the BRACE<sup>4</sup> Character Profile is designed for use by investigators, clinicians, legal adversaries and advocates, task forces, or anyone else who has a need to profile any known or well conceptualized individual, dead or alive, real or fictional. Similar to John Douglas’ rationale for developing a new classification system based on functional characteristics, the BRACE Character Profile evolved from an initial thesis<sup>5</sup> against the inadequate and dysfunctional criterion-based classification of personality disorders by the American Psychiatric Association<sup>6</sup>. The BRACE Character Profile reveals an individual’s characteristic patterns of maladaptive thought, behavior, and motivation. And, an individual’s BRACE Character Profile “signature” pattern of characteristics can then be compared and contrasted with any other individual or prototypical type in the BRACE Character Profile database, including the ten DSM-IV-TR<sup>7</sup>

personality disorders, automatically and simultaneously! The beauty of the process is that the person who establishes the criminal's basic BRACE Character Profile "signature pattern" does not need to know anything about investigating or psychiatry.

The BRACE Character Profile is a 75 item 5-point rating scale which can be completed by anyone<sup>8</sup> with basic reading skills, good critical thinking skills, and access to knowledge about the person being rated. The 75 input ratings are entered into a software program which automatically generates the basic graphics and correlation charts used for interpretation and analysis. Note that the person with the input form and the software program to generate the graphics and charts does not need to have any knowledge about the person being rated, just access to those who do. Similarly, the person interpreting the results does not need to know the identity of the person rated or the identities of those who completed the input ratings, or even the identity of the person who generated the output graphics and charts.

### **Potential COLD CASE Applications<sup>9</sup> of the BRACE Character Profile™**

The BRACE Character Profile will only be useful in some cold cases because there must either be a "person of interest" or a well conceptualized UNSUB. However, given a valid set of input ratings, the resulting BRACE Character Profile graphics and correlation charts would be available for consideration and analysis by anyone connected with the case. Additionally, the process of establishing the input ratings may help the investigators and others involved to "crystallize" the persona of the UNSUB in their imaginations. The whole process helps objectify the UNSUB. Some of the ratings will be obvious and "jump out at you." Some will exercise your brain and your frustration tolerance.

#### **BRACE Character Profile 5-point Rating Scale**

- 0 = Rarely, Slightly, or Not Characteristic at All
- 1 = Somewhat, Sometimes, Mildly Characteristic
- 2 = Often or Frequently or Strongly Characteristic
- 3 = Very Often or Very Strongly Characteristic
- 4 = Consistently, Extremely, Core Characteristic
- X = No knowledge.

As long as the basic rating guidelines are carefully followed, the BRACE Character Profile is very flexible when it comes to establishing the input ratings. The best method of gathering the input ratings depends on the nature of the case and who has the knowledge. In fact, the best method may not be apparent until the input ratings are being gathered.

For example, BTK's BRACE Character Profile was completed May 14, 2004, nine months before Dennis Rader was identified. BTK's input ratings were developed through the message board at [www.deviantcrimes.com](http://www.deviantcrimes.com) and the resulting analysis was posted in the Serial Crimes/Serial Murders section<sup>10</sup> in hopes that the profile would help solve the case. Zodiac's BRACE Character Profile was recently added to the same section<sup>11</sup>. BTK's final set of ratings were "negotiated," but I made the final decision when there were differences of opinion. The final ratings could have been averaged and rounded off. In Zodiac's case, all of the input ratings were provided by Bryan Nelson, who owns [www.deviantcrimes.com](http://www.deviantcrimes.com) and has been studying the

Zodiac case for years. I did the analysis for both profiles, but the results are still available for anyone to analyze.

The ratings are used to automatically generate basic graphics of the person rated and to automatically generate the person's correlation with other individuals and prototypical types (e.g., personality disorders) already in the BRACE Character Profile database. The amount of potential data available for analysis is mind boggling. The first task of the analysis is to narrow the focus to the purpose of the profile. Just as the best method of gathering the input ratings depends on the nature of the case and who has the knowledge, what portion of the available data needs to be analyzed depends on the nature of the questions being asked and the skills and knowledge of those doing the analysis. For example, it is relatively easy to answer specific questions about an UNSUB's significant positive or negative correlations with prototypical types, such as DSM-IV-TR personality disorders or a 40-point Hare PCL-R<sup>12</sup> psychopath. A more sophisticated analysis of the same data can be made by someone with more knowledge about personality disorders and psychopathy in general and criminals in particular. An even more sophisticated analysis can be made by someone familiar with the BRACE Character Profile basic structure and graphic: three Domains (Cognitive, Behavior, and Existential or Motivational) and three character types<sup>13</sup> (Type A, Type B, and Type C).

The BRACE Character Profile™ requires a “person of interest” or a well conceptualized UNSUB, one or more willing raters (pool knowledge, minimize bias), and rating the 75 statements on a 5-point scale (0 to 4). The graphics and charts for analysis are generated automatically. The following are some questions and guidelines to consider before attempting to use the BRACE Character Profile for a cold case:

-Are you willing to familiarize yourself with the BRACE Character Profile™ input form<sup>14</sup> (75 item 5-point rating scale) and the rating guidelines?

-Are you willing to practice using the BRACE Character Profile by rating the fictional character Dr. Hannibal Lecter as he is portrayed in the movie Silence of the Lambs? Practice is available free online at BRACEanalysis.com.

-Do you have access to the software, or access to someone who does, to generate the basic graphics and correlation charts? The nature of the case and the purpose of the profile will determine what program package is needed. Note that it is cheaper to buy the software than to pay to have the graphics and correlations generated through BRACEanalysis.com.

-Is there a “person of interest” or suspect? Can you get access to two or more people who know the suspect well and are willing to spend two or three hours with you to negotiate a consensus set of input ratings? Or, is there an objective third party to coordinate gathering the input ratings?

-Is there a lot of evidence? Can you get access to LE who are most familiar with the evidence and the related functional characteristics of the suspect or UNSUB? Do those familiar with the evidence have good critical thinking skills? Are they willing to establish a consensus set of input ratings?

-Are there two or more investigators who are obsessed with the case? Can you get access to them? Or, are they willing to establish a consensus set of input ratings and forward the results to you?

The ideal would be a small task force, or two or three members of the task force, willing to meet several times to establish a single set of input ratings. Each could independently complete the input ratings and then meet to pool knowledge and negotiate the final consensus set of ratings. Someone would have to make the final decision on disputed ratings. I suggest the lead investigator or a professional consultant make the final decision. The more people involved, the longer it will take, unless you simply decide to average the scores, which I have never done. The resulting graphics and correlation charts would be available for consideration and discussion by all interested parties.

### **INSTRUCTIONS**

Rate each item 0,1,2,3, 4, or X.

Enter the rating in the space provided.

Attempt to rate each item, even if there is some doubt.

It is important to rate each item as accurately as possible.

If you clearly have no knowledge about an item, rate the item X.

When in doubt between two ratings, be conservative and select the lower rating.

Frequently refer to the rating scale. Over or under rating items distorts the profile.

Read each item carefully, considering the full content of the item. Pay very close attention to the wording, particularly: if, may, and, both, etc.

### **GENERAL RATING GUIDELINES**

If an item is 100% true, it is a 4.

If there are some parts that are not true but overall the item is at least 75% true, it is a 3.

If half is 100% true but half is not true at all or only partially true, it is at least a 2.

If one or more parts is true, it is at least a 1.

If almost all of the item is false most of the time, it is a 0.

(Informed speculation is encouraged.)

### **SAMPLE ITEMS**

29. Threatened and actual violence are the tools of choice for both problem solving and motivating others. Ultimately, relies more on physical threats and nonverbal skills than on verbal skills for conflict resolution. Is quick to anger and shows a willingness to use violence. Will use weapons and wants others to know it. Enjoys being feared and having a "reputation" for violence.

30. Wants all of Life's benefits with none of the costs --- pleasure, acceptance, and success without sacrifices, work, or stress. Is poorly motivated for self-improvement. Is ultimately highly dependent, seeking safety and security through others.

31. Is attention seeking; may be outlandish, provocative, or intentionally tacky, but does have a sense of personal style and fashion. Uses clothes as a means of self-expression and to attract attention; may cross gender lines in dress style --- would rather offend or shock than be ignored.

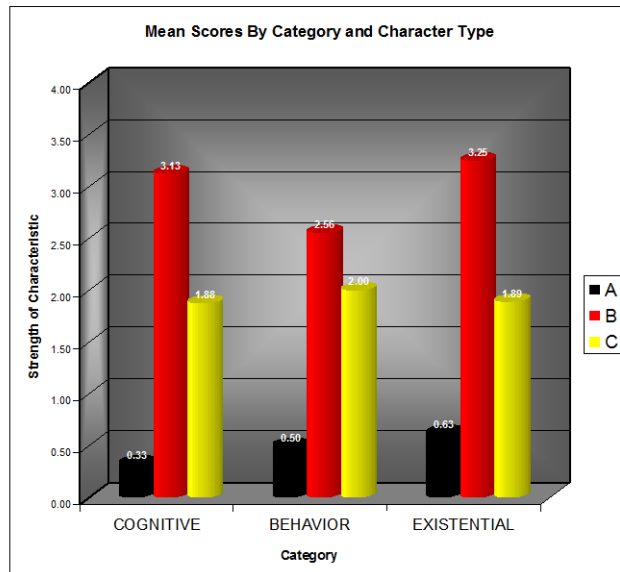
32. Creates emotional crises for others to resolve, often sacrificing all else to pursue current fantasy interests. Has very little self-restraint and self-discipline since self-expression and feel-good experiences are so much a part of values and lifestyle. Whole life appears to be crisis controlled. Dramatic emotional displays are well practiced role playing, ranging from remorse to excitement; may be able to produce laughter or tears on demand; will have increasingly dramatic and intense emotional outbursts when unsuccessful in motivating others according to current desires; is increasingly subject to being emotionally labile and having a weak sense of self and purpose.

BRACE™ profiling involves:

1. Describing core aspects of human nature (i.e., three domains of functioning: Cognitive, Behavior, Motivation) in functional terms (i.e., three prototypical character types: Type A, Type B, and Type C),
2. Measuring the degree to which an individual's characteristics are similar to and different from each Type in each Domain (i.e., establish the 75 input ratings of the BRACE Character Profile),
3. Generating the basic scores and related graphic profile (i.e., enter the 75 ratings into an Excel spreadsheet),
4. Comparing and contrasting the individual's profile with the profiles of other known individuals (e.g., serial killer Joel Rifkin, spy Robert Philip Hanssen, fictional character Dr. Hannibal Lecter) and prototypical types already in the database (e.g., DSM-IV-TR Personality Disorders, 40-point Hare PCL-R),
5. Interpreting the results according to the purpose of the profile, and
6. Adding the profile to any related databases (e.g., serial killers, domestic terrorists, arsonists, spouse abusers).

BTK's May 14, 2004 basic BRACE Character Profile graphic<sup>15</sup>:

**BRACE Character Profile™**



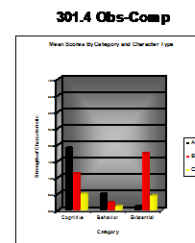
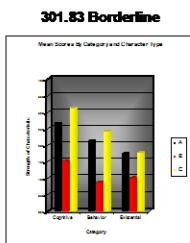
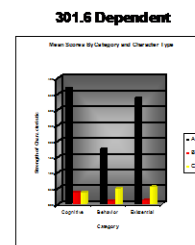
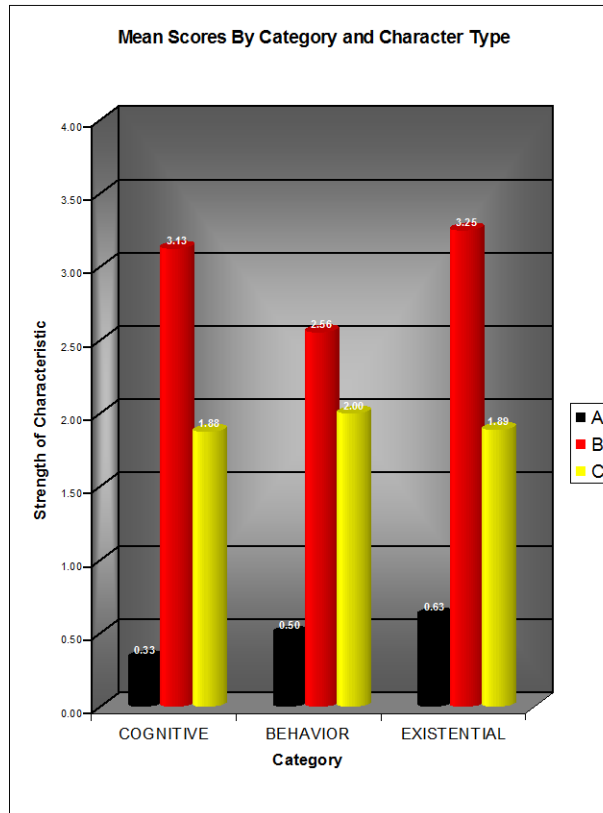
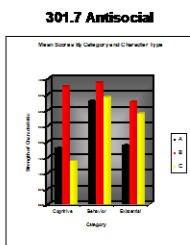
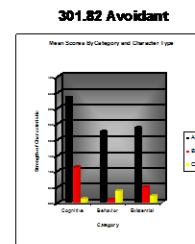
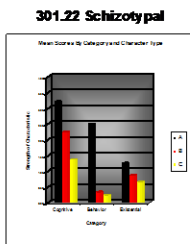
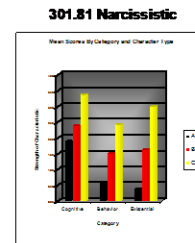
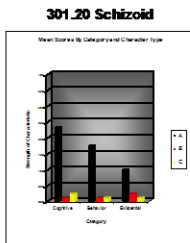
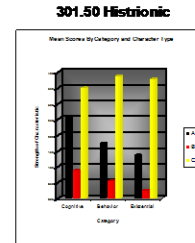
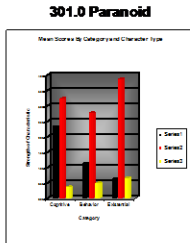
**BTK**  
Means by Character Type and Variables

	Cognitive	Behavior	Existential	
A	0.33	0.50	0.63	0.49
B	3.13	2.56	3.25	2.98
C	1.88	2.00	1.89	1.92
	1.78	1.69	1.92	1.79



BTK's May 14, 2004 basic BRACE Character Profile graphic (center) with the graphics of the 10 DSM-IV-TR Personality Disorders for easy visual comparison:

**BRACE Character Profile™ Comparison to DSM-IV-TR™ Personality Disorders**



**BTK**

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	1.78	1.69	1.92	1.79

## Profiling: Chicken or Egg?

First there has to be information (egg). Then there has to be access to it (chicken). The information has to be accurate (good egg) and those who have it must have good critical thinking skills (good chicken) and the BRACE Character Profile™ to organize it (chicken omelet).

Russell L. Smith

### **REFERENCES AND NOTES:**

1. <http://www.fbi.gov/hq/td/academy/bsu/bsu.htm> “The Behavioral Science Unit is one of the instructional components of the FBI's Training and Development Division at Quantico, Virginia. Its mission is to develop and provide programs of training, research, and consultation in the behavioral and social sciences in furtherance of the FBI's strategic priorities; in support of the law enforcement and intelligence communities' operational effectiveness.”
2. Serial murders are not always intraracial and serial murders are not all white. Many profilers erroneously went with the odds to profile the Baton Rouge serial killer and the D.C. Snipers as white.
3. Article by John Douglas: Organized vs. Disorganized Slayings: How to Describe a Crime Scene. <http://www.johndouglasmindhunter.com/articles/030214.php>
4. BRACE is an acronym for Behavioral Relativity and Cognitive Economics. See the FAQ section of [www.BRACEanalysis](http://www.BRACEanalysis.com) for details about the BRACE™ model and the BRACE Character Profile™.
5. Smith, RL. Applied Behavioral Relativity: Personality Development (Solomon vs. DSM-IV or Solomon the Unknown Father Of Cognitive-Behaviorism) at the 3ed Annual Conference of the North American Association Of Masters In Psychology (NAMP) in Greensboro, N.C. on June 23, 1996. This presentation was converted into a book, Solomon's Crime Prevention Package: Character Development (subtitle) Criminal Thinking and Criminal Conduct, ISBN: 1928913016 © 1999, which is now available as a free download through the BRACE Services section of [www.BRACEanalysis.com](http://www.BRACEanalysis.com).
6. American Psychiatric Association: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition. Washington, DC, American Psychiatric Association, 1994.
7. American Psychiatric Association: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, Text Revision. Washington, DC, American Psychiatric Association, 2000.
8. One of the most interesting real life applications of the BRACE Character Profile is the basis of Jack Osborne's 2005 publication, BLOOD RED: Genesis of a Psychopath, which is a novella with a 130 page appendices about the BRACE Character Profile, available through [www.lulu.com/content/186817](http://www.lulu.com/content/186817) . The novella is for mature readers.

9. Before using the BRACE Character Profile, read the Disclaimer at <http://www.braceanalysis.com/clientarea-disclaimer.html> .
10. <http://www.deviantcrimes.com/BTKBRACE.htm>
11. <http://www.deviantcrimes.com/ZodiacBRACE.htm>
12. Hare, R.D. (1991) The Psychopathy Checklist-Revised. Toronto, Canada: Multi-Health Systems.
13. For the BRACE Character Profile prototypical character types (Type A, Type B, and Type C) in DSM-IV™ format, see the FAQ section at [www.BRACEanalysis.com](http://www.BRACEanalysis.com) or the free download of Solomon's Crime Prevention Package: Character Development, which is available through the link in the BRACE Services section.
14. All of the instructions and the 75 items are available in the practice section at [www.BRACEanalysis.com](http://www.BRACEanalysis.com). You can practice on Dr. Hannibal Lecter as he is portrayed in the movie Silence of the Lambs.
15. See <http://www.deviantcrimes.com/BTKBRACE.htm> for additional graphics and correlation charts.